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This study on desirable characteristics of teachers of education was based on questionnaire returns from 167 college administrators, 153 heads of departments of education, 260 teachers of education, 353 students of education, 137 public school administrators, and 169 public school teachers.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHERS OF EDUCATION IN THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION MEMBER COLLEGES AND THE DEGREE TO WHICH THESE CHARACTERISTICS APPEAR TO EXIST

- Arthur W. Hartung -

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
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Purpose

This study of the professor of Education was developed because of the author's interest in a subject about which so little information seemed to be available. It was not designed with any idea of being a complete study of the subject, but rather as a beginning. The work has been carried out with a goal of fulfilling a definite group of objectives. These objectives include the following purposes:

1. To determine what characteristics are considered most desirable for teachers of Education to possess and how frequently these appear to exist among such teachers.

2. To attempt to discover the degree of importance of these characteristics in relation to each other.

3. To compare the attitudes of various groups of educators regarding the subject being studied.

4. To provide a means for groups of educators to understand each others' attitudes more fully in regard to teacher traits.

5. To help teachers of Education to evaluate themselves better through self-analysis in the light of the findings.

Procedure

A number of limitations had to be placed upon such a broad topic; these are established by the title itself. It was felt that the best way to gather the information needed lay in obtaining the ideas of many persons who were or had been in contact with teachers of Education. In order to get their ideas into a usable form for comparison, it was necessary that the same form be used by all participants. The development of a questionnaire form came about through the following steps:

1. Study of various possible traits of teachers of Education.

2. Development of a tentative questionnaire form which was studied by a class in Higher Education at The Pennsylvania State College.

3. Revision upon advice of "trial juries" of various groups of educators.

4. Final revision and approval by author's advisory committee.

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The questionnaire which was finally developed contained six sections with the following numbers of items: as a Teacher, 25; as a Scholar, 9; as a College Faculty Member, 10; as a counselor of Students, 8; as a Citizen, 7; and as a Person, 16. Respondents were asked to indicate whether each trait was of slight, moderate, or extreme importance and whether it was typical or not typical of teachers of Education. Following, in the order noted, is a list naming each participating group, the number of questionnaires submitted to each group, and the number of questionnaires received from each participating group: College Administrators, 254, 167; Heads of Departments of Education, 254, 154; Teachers of Education, 508, 260; Students of Education, 1,000, 356; Public School Administrators, 250, 137; and Public School Teachers, 250, 169.

Summary of Replies to Questionnaires

All groups of educators consulted in gathering data indicates similar opinions regarding the importance of certain characteristics of teachers of Education. It is felt that the similarity between their opinions is striking. There were some variations by a group or so of participants on some items. These may be traits which particular experiences unique to certain types of educators have tempered.

Survey of the traits considered most important indicates that all groups consulted are closely agreed as to which characteristics are felt to be of the greatest importance in teachers of Education. Following is a list of the fifteen traits rated highest in importance:

Important qualities to achieve from a trait point of view, the Professor of Education:

1. Is emotionally stable and mature.
2. Leads students to think for themselves.
3. Is friendly, democratic, tolerant, and helpful in student relations.
4. Helps students to recognize, analyze, and evaluate their own problems.
5. Understands problems most commonly faced by students in their training and in their professional careers.
6. Promotes wholesome student-teacher relationships through fairness, understanding, and cheerfulness.
7. Takes broad (rather than personal or departmental) view of problems.
8. Cooperates to the fullest degree with other member of the faculty or staff.
9. Organizes and prepares work carefully.

10. Emphasizes practical applications of educational principles studied.

11. Has enthusiasm for teaching that inspires others to want to teach.

12. His behavior reflects high personal standards.

13. Shows active interest in continued professional study.

14. Gives proper consideration to the ideas of others.

15. Has a genial manner and a good sense of humor.

As in the case of traits felt most important, there was general agreement among the groups of participants concerning the characteristics felt to be most nearly typical of teachers of Education. The list of fifteen traits felt to be most nearly typical includes the following:

The professor of Education:

1. Has good health and physical vigor.

2. In behavior reflects high personal standards.

3. Is emotionally stable and mature.

4. Speech is grammatically correct.

5. Has participated constructively in departmental and faculty meetings.

6. Is high in mental ability.

7. Has a graduate major in the majority of the work being taught.

8. Observes social customs and manners carefully.

9. Contributes effectively in committee planning and work.

10. Appears to have a happy, wholesome home life.

11. Is always neat and well groomed.

12. Has a graduate degree from a university rated high in Education.

13. Strives to be careful in the use of construction criticism.

14. Is friendly, democratic, tolerant, helpful in student relations.

15. Is well informed on current events and public affairs.

It will readily be seen that only three characteristics are common to both of the foregoing lists. Thus, it is indicated by the lists that the six groups consulted do not feel that teachers of Education have ordinarily held the traits which were judged most important. Seven of the fifteen characteristics rated as extremely important to the greatest degree were listed under the heading "As a Teacher." The importance placed on teaching and the relationships stemming from it is definitely greatest. However, only one such trait was classified as typical. Two characteristics in the area, "As a Scholar", were felt typical; yet none were felt to be extremely important. Three of the traits considered most important came from the "As a College Faculty Member" classification. Two "As a Counselor of Students" traits were rated extremely important, and one from this category was listed among the most nearly typical characteristics. The one classification furnishing no items to either list was that "As a Citizen".

It may be that it is entirely proper for teachers of Education to hold the characteristics judged as most nearly typical. They appear to be good qualities to possess. However, the majority of the traits are not thought to be nearly so important as are others from the questionnaire. It is also felt that the items selected as most important may be so, but at the same time it is almost inconceivable that certain other items in the questionnaire could fail to be thought extremely important as well. The suggestion is made that perhaps some educators' philosophies toward higher education may lay behind the times.

Regardless of the interpretation placed upon the data gathered, it is apparent that a wide gulf exists between what people think is most important and what they believe to exist in teachers of Education.

Implications of the Study

The situation noted in the foregoing paragraph brings to mind certain implications of this study for institutions educating teachers and for present-day teachers of Education as well as certain areas in which further study is recommended. These are as follows:

Implications of This Study for Institutions Educating Teachers:

1. Greater emphasis should be placed on the training of college teachers.

2. Existing college-teacher training programs should be improved in an effort to make most important characteristics also typical.

3. An effort should be made to make educators more fully aware of what traits are most important in teachers.

4. Improvement is needed in methods of judging performance.

Implications of This Study for Present-Day Teachers of Education:

1. Teachers need to evaluate their own performance.

2. Whenever possible, teachers should take advantage of opportunities for further study and training.

3. Since so much is felt lacking, teachers need to make a continuous effort toward self-improvement.

4. Personal philosophies of teaching need to be modernized.

Areas in Which Further Study is Recommended:

1. Research should be conducted relating to all kinds of college teachers.

2. There is need for study of teachers in all kinds of higher institutions.

3. There should be a determination of whether indicated opinions are recognized in practice.

4. Greater detail regarding single traits or groups or related traits is needed.